

CHAPTER IV

THE OFFICIAL FESTIVALS OF OSIRIS

§ I. *The Festival at Sais*

SUCH, then, were the principal events of the farmer's calendar. With the in ancient Egypt, and such the simple religious rites by which he celebrated them. But we have still to consider the Osirian festivals of the official calendar, so far as these are described by Greek writers or recorded on the Egyptian

in examining them it is necessary to bear in mind that on account of the movable year of the old Egyptian calendar the true or astronomical dates of the official festivals the natural must have varied from year to year, at least until the adoption of the fixed Alexandrian year in 30 B.C. From that time onward, apparently, the dates of the festivals were determined by the new calendar, and so ceased to rotate throughout the length of the solar year. At all events Plutarch, writing about the end of the first century, implies that they were then fixed, not movable; for though he does not mention the Alexandrian calendar, he clearly dates the festivals by it.¹ Moreover, the long festal calendar of

¹ Thus with regard to the Egyptian of Athyr in the Alexandrian calendar, month of Athyr he tells us that the sun namely October 28-26. November was then in the sign of the Scorpion. Again, he says (*op. cit.* 43) that the (*Isis et Osiris*, 13), that Athyr cor- festival of the beginning of spring was responded to the Athenian month held at the new moon of the month Pyanepsion and the Boeotian month Phamenoth, which, in the Alexandrian Damatrius (*op. cit.* 69), that it was the calendar, corresponded to February month of sowing (*id.*), that in it the March 26. Further, he tells us that a Nile sank, the earth was laid bare by festival was celebrated on the 23rd of

the retreat of the inundation, the leaves
 Phaophi after the autumn
 equinox
 fell, and the nights grew longer than (*op.*
cit. 52), and in the Alexandrian
 the days (*op. cit.* 39). These inclica-
 calendar Phaophi began on
 September
 tions agree on the whole with the date 28, a
 few days after the autumn equinox.
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